

## Wisconsin School Social Worker 2010 Survey Summary

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*For more information from the School  
Social Work Practice Guide visit:*  
[http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw\\_sswguide](http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_sswguide)

### Description

The Wisconsin School Social Work Survey was developed to identify 1) what issues or areas of responsibility Wisconsin school social workers are involved in (e.g., special education, school attendance, substance abuse) and 2) what professional strategies and programs they are using to address these areas of responsibility (e.g., consultation, advocacy, home visits).

The survey asks respondents to estimate the amount of time they spend on each of the items using the following scale:

1. High – indicating involvement at least a few times weekly
2. Medium – indicating involvement at least once weekly
3. Low – indicating involvement at least once monthly
4. Infrequent – indicating involvement less than monthly
5. Not at all

The survey has been administered every three years using a census sample (attempting to make it widely available to as many school social workers in the state as possible) in 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010 by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) with the important support of the Wisconsin School Social Work Association (WSSWA).

The most recent survey included the following additions:

- Respondents were asked to report how many school buildings they were assigned to work in, with their choices being one, two, three, four, five, six, seven or more, or none.
- Under Areas of Responsibility
  - ✓ “Bullying prevention” was added to the item “anti-victim education/protective behaviors.”
  - ✓ “Mental health/illness,” “self injury,” and “students living in out-of-home care” were added to the list of choices.
- Under Professional Strategies or Programs
  - ✓ “Data-based decision-making,” “evaluation of professional practice,” “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS),” “Response to Intervention (RtI),” and “restorative justice” were added to the list of choices.
  - ✓ “Student assistance programs/group work” was changed to “Group work/counseling/student assistance programs.”

## Distribution and Response Rates

The survey was available electronically on the DPI website from September to December 2010, and was marketed through the school social worker email groups and regional meetings of school social workers throughout the state and the annual state conference hosted by WSSWA. A total of 307 of the 557 Wisconsin school social workers completed the survey (55.1 percent), which is the highest response rate of the five surveys.

## Analysis

Weighted aggregate scores were calculated, in order to reflect the overall level of involvement with each of the 38 areas of responsibility and 43 professional strategies and programs. These weighted scores were then used to rank the items from highest to lowest weight (i.e., amount of time devoted to that particular item). Weighted scores were calculated in the following manner:

1. Convert each total number of responses to each high, medium, low, and infrequent rating for each item to a percentage.
2. Weight each percentage:
  - a. Multiply each percentage of “high” responses by four.
  - b. Multiply each percentage of “medium” responses by three.
  - c. Multiply each percentage of “low” responses by two.
  - d. Multiply percentages of “infrequent” responses by one.
  - e. Eliminate percentages of “not at all” responses.
3. Add all of the weighted scores for each item to create an aggregate weighted score for each item.

Using this method, the highest possible weighted aggregate score for any single item is 4.00 (i.e.,  $4 \times 100\% = 4.00$ ).

## Results

*How many school buildings are Wisconsin school social workers assigned to work in?*

No. of School Buildings	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No. of Responses	4	122	80	40	21	11	6	23
Percentage of Responses	1.3%	39.7%	26.1%	13.0%	6.8%	3.6%	2.0%	7.5%

Almost two-thirds (65.8%) of respondents are assigned to one or two school buildings.

Almost four out of five (78.8%) respondents work in three or fewer school buildings.

*What percentage of time do Wisconsin school social workers spend on special education services?*

Percentage of Time	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100
No. of Respondents	32	39	49	54	35	21	17	22	14	23
Percent Responses	10.4%	12.7%	16.0%	17.6%	11.4%	6.8%	5.5%	7.2%	4.6%	7.5%

The most frequent range of time spent on special education services is 31-40 percent, followed by 21-30 percent, and then 41-50 percent. Slightly less than a third (31.7%) of respondents reported spending over half their time on special education services.

*What issues are Wisconsin school social workers addressing?*

The table below ranks the areas of responsibility that received weighted scores of 3.00 or higher. The appendix includes a ranked list of all areas of responsibility with a weighted score for each item for all respondents, elementary school respondents only (86), middle school respondents only (25), and high school respondents only (62).

**Top Areas of Responsibility – All Survey Respondents PreK-12**

Area of Responsibility	Weighted Score
1. Children at risk	3.62
2. Behavior management	3.46
3. Mental health, illness	3.45
4. Attendance, truancy, dropouts	3.45
5. Parent-child relationships	3.36
6. Basic human needs	3.35
7. Special education	3.33
8. Crisis	3.29
9. Family trauma, change	3.19
10. Conflict resolution, anger management	3.15

Survey responses can also be analyzed based upon respondents' grade level of assignments. The table below represents the areas of responsibility that received weighted scores of 3.00 or higher for survey respondents who indicated they worked at one grade range only (elementary, middle, or high school levels).

**Top Areas of Responsibility – Single Grade Range Only**

Areas of Responsibility	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score
Alcohol, tobacco & other drug abuse	*	*	*	*	10	3.17
Anti-victim education, protective behaviors, bullying prevention	*	*	12	3.04	*	*
Attendance, truancy, dropouts	5	3.41	6	3.60	1	3.74
Basic human needs	3	3.47	8	3.32	7	3.27
Behavior management	1	3.73	2	3.80	6	3.31
Children at risk	2	3.53	4	3.64	3	3.69
Conflict resolution, anger management	8	3.26	5	3.64	12	3.13
Crisis	7	3.28	7	3.56	5	3.41
Family trauma, change	9	3.21	10	3.16	8	3.20
Homelessness	*	*	11	3.04	14	3.05
Juvenile delinquency	*	*	*	*	13	3.10
Mental health, illness	10	3.20	3	3.68	2	3.70
Parent-child relationships	6	3.34	9	3.32	4	3.44
Special education	4	3.42	1	3.84	9	3.18
School age parents	*	*	*	*	11	3.15

\* Weighted score did not meet or exceed 3.00 for this item.

*How do the issues addressed by Wisconsin elementary, middle, and high school social workers differ?*

Survey responses indicate the time devoted by school social workers to some issues are different related to grade level assignment. Some, but not all, of these differences are associated with different issues being more prevalent at different ages (i.e., childhood vs. adolescence). Below is a table that highlights differences (i.e., difference in weighted score of .50 or higher) in the areas of responsibility reported by survey respondents at the elementary, middle, or high school levels.

**Highlighted Differences among Issues Addressed by Assigned Grade Range**

Areas of Responsibility	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score
Alcohol, tobacco & other drug abuse	27	1.25	25	2.20	10	3.17
Anti-victim education, protective behaviors, bullying prevention	17	2.52	12	3.04	17	2.69
Conflict resolution, anger management	8	3.26	5	3.64	12	3.13
Eating disorders	34	1.06	34	1.32	35	1.67
Gender issues	35	0.85	31	1.64	30	2.18
Human growth & development	29	1.23	27	1.96	33	1.79
Juvenile delinquency	25	1.39	15	2.84	13	3.10
Pregnancy prevention	37	0.38	30	1.72	24	2.51
School age parents	38	0.20	36	1.00	11	3.15
Self-injury	31	1.19	24	2.29	23	2.55
Sexual assault prevention	28	1.25	19	1.72	31	2.16
Special education	4	3.42	1	3.84	9	3.18
Students living in out-of-home care	20	1.97	18	2.72	18	2.69
Suicide prevention	26	1.30	22	2.58	20	2.62
Suspension, expulsion	24	1.45	19	2.72	28	2.26
Transition plans	32	1.17	28	1.88	22	2.57

*What professional strategies and programs are Wisconsin school social workers using to address these issues?*

The following table ranks the professional strategies and programs that received weighted scores of 3.00 or higher. The appendix includes a ranked list of all professional strategies and programs with a weighted score for each item for all respondents, elementary school respondents only, middle school respondents only, and high school respondents only.

### Top Professional Strategies and Programs – All Survey Respondents PreK-12

Professional Strategy or Program	Weighted Score
1. Advocacy for students, families	3.66
2. Individual student counseling	3.58
3. Consultation	3.56
4. Referral & information	3.37
5. Casework, management	3.29
6. Pupil services teaming	3.16
7. Crisis intervention, coordination	3.14
8. Assessment of students	3.09
9. Building consultation team	3.04
10. School-home liaison, home visits	3.01

Survey responses can also be analyzed based upon respondents' grade level of assignments. The table below represents the professional strategies and programs that received weighted scores of 3.00 or higher for survey respondents who indicated they worked at one grade range only – elementary, middle, or high school levels.

### Top Professional Strategies and Programs – Single Grade Range Only

Professional Strategies and Programs	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score
Advocacy for students, families	1	3.70	2	3.72	2	3.57
Alternative school, program	*	*	*	*	8	3.03
Assessment of students	5	3.35	14	3.04	9	3.03
Building consultation team	7	3.19	6	3.44	*	*
Case work, management	3	3.44	5	3.48	5	3.27
Consultation	2	3.59	3	3.64	4	3.34
Crisis intervention, coordination	8	3.17	11	3.24	6	3.20
Group work, counseling, SAPs	*	*	4	3.56	*	*
Individual student counseling	4	3.43	1	3.88	1	3.90
Observations of students	11	3.00	*	*	*	*
Parent conferences	*	*	8	3.36	*	*
Peer programs	*	*	9	3.36	*	*
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)	12	3.00	*	*	*	*
Pupil services teaming	10	3.04	7	3.42	7	3.05
Referral & information	6	3.33	12	3.17	3	3.45
School-community collaborative partnerships	*	*	13	3.13	*	*
School-home liaison, home visits	9	3.16	10	3.29	*	*

\* Weighted score did not meet or exceed 3.00 for this item.

*How do the professional strategies and programs used by Wisconsin elementary, middle, and high school social workers differ?*

Survey responses indicate the time spent by school social workers implementing professional strategies and programs are different related to grade level assignment. Most of these differences are not associated with professional strategies or programs being used more often with students at different ages (i.e., childhood vs. adolescence). Below is a table that highlights differences (i.e., difference in weighted score of .50 or higher) in the areas of responsibility reported by survey respondents at the elementary, middle, or high school levels.

**Highlighted Differences among Professional Strategies and Programs Utilized by Assigned Grade Range**

Professional Strategies and Programs	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score
Alternative school, program	36	1.24	19	2.24	8	3.03
Boarding homes	43	0.24	41	0.72	40	0.81
Before/after/summer school program	35	1.26	25	1.80	34	1.32
Building consultation team	7	3.19	6	3.44	11	2.86
Group work, counseling, SAPs	14	2.94	4	3.56	13	2.79
Observations of students	11	3.00	16	2.72	17	2.20
Parent conferences	13	2.95	8	3.36	12	2.80
Peer programs	27	1.60	9	3.36	22	1.88
Policy development	31	1.33	22	2.04	32	1.47
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)	12	3.00	37	1.20	37	1.13
Response to Intervention (RtI)	15	2.69	15	2.75	20	1.93
School-community collaborative partnerships	18	2.45	13	3.13	14	2.76
School-community liaison	16	2.66	29	1.61	24	1.78
School health services	30	1.51	17	2.63	15	2.69
Supervision of school social work students	37	1.11	43	0.17	43	0.30
Supervision of school social workers	42	0.29	26	1.21	38	0.37

*How are Wisconsin school social workers involved in systemic activities?*

A number of the professional strategies listed in the survey involve activities that bring about systemic change to a school or school-community. School social workers are specifically trained to examine systems and work to make them more responsive to their clients. Because some of these strategies often are lower-frequency activities, it is more descriptive to share how many Wisconsin school social workers are involved, rather than how much time is devoted to them. For each identified activity, the percentage of Wisconsin school social workers indicating any level of involvement is listed.

### Involvement in Systemic Activities

Professional Strategy or Program	% of School Social Workers Reporting Involvement
Grant writing/management	59%
Comprehensive school counseling program	68%
Policy development	76%
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)	86%
Program development	85%
Program evaluation	83%
Research	75%
Response to Intervention (Rtl)	91%
School-community collaborative partnerships	94%
Staff development/training/in-services	93%

### Responses to New 2010 Survey Items

Below is a list of the areas of responsibility that were new to the 2010 survey. The ranks and weighted scores for all respondents, elementary school respondents only, middle school respondents only, and high school respondents only are listed.

Areas of Responsibility	Overall		Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score
Mental health, illness	3	3.45	10	3.20	3	3.68	2	3.70
Self injury	25	1.89	31	1.19	24	2.29	23	2.55
Students living in out-home-care	20	2.22	20	1.97	18	2.72	18	2.69

Below is a list of the professional strategies and programs that were new to the 2010 survey. The ranks and weighted scores for all respondents, elementary school respondents only, middle school respondents only, and high school respondents only are listed.

Professional Strategies and Programs	Overall		Elementary		Middle School		High School	
	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score	Rank	Weighted Score
Data-based decision making	16	2.52	17	2.57	18	2.56	16	2.44
Evaluation of professional practice	28	1.67	28	1.60	30	1.56	27	1.61
Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)	14	2.62	12	3.00	37	1.20	37	1.13
Response to Intervention (Rtl)	18	2.41	15	2.69	15	2.75	20	1.93
Restorative justice	33	1.40	34	1.27	32	1.54	31	1.47

Questions about the Wisconsin School Social Work Survey can be directed to Nic Dibble, Consultant, School Social Work Services, at (608) 266-0963 or [nic.dibble@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:nic.dibble@dpi.wi.gov).